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NCC JAPAN OPPOSES ROYAL VISIT TO THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

On March 11, 1986, news of the autumn visit to the Republic of Korea by Japanese Crown Prince Akihito and Crown Princess Michiko was announced simultaneously by Korean and Japanese authorities. Various Christian groups and individuals responded immediately, protesting that as a diplomatic action it went completely against the will of the Japanese people. Many stressed that the royal family does not represent the Japanese public. The Central Committee of the NCC Japan passed the following statement on April 10, 1986.

The Fifth Central Committee of the National Christian Council in Japan expresses our opposition to the visit by Crown Prince Akihito and Princess Michiko to the Republic of Korea planned for the Fall of this year.

We, Christians in Japan, strongly request the Government of Japan to guarantee the human rights of Koreans in Japan. Furthermore, we express our concern that, without the restoration of democracy in south Korea, true peace in Asia cannot be realized.

During the period of forty years following the Pacific War, the Japanese government's policy in relation to south Korea has not carried out its responsibility to make amends for past colonial policies in Korea. Moreover, resisting international judicial opinion, the Alien Registration Law continues to be forced upon people. Those who protest by refusing to fingerprint on the Alien Registration cards are refused re-entry permits to the country, thus completely restricting their travel outside Japan. In many ways, bureaucratic control over Korean residents in Japan has reached new heights.

It is our concern that the visit of the Crown Prince and Princess will signal recognition of the present political situation there. We believe that such a visit will further solidify the political division of the south and the north.

In the past, Japanese churches did not protest when Japan invaded other Asian countries. When Christians in Korea protested against the enforcement of worship at Shinto Shrines under Japanese colonial occupation and were forcefully suppressed, Japanese churches stood on the side of the State rather than sharing the burden with their brothers and sisters in Christ. With sincere repentance of our past mistakes, we here profess our hope to realize true fellowship in Christ with brother and sister Christians in Korea.

[signed]

Rev. SATO Kunihiro
Moderator, NCC-J

Rev. MAEJIMA Munetoshi
General Secretary, NCC-J

SOUTH AFRICAN
FORMER PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE
SPEAKS AT JAPAN CHRISTIAN CENTRE

In South Africa, all are classified according to race and colour--except Japanese. All are made supremely aware of the colour of their skin--except Japanese. Japanese in South Africa, the majority of them engaged in business, are classed as "honourary whites."

That status facilitates what Rev. Tshe-nuweni Simon Farisani described as Japan's "roaring trade" with South Africa. Rev. Farisani, Dean of 121 Evangelical Lutheran congregations in the South African "homeland" of Venda, was visiting Japan as a guest of Amnesty International - Japan. He spoke at the Christian Centre on April 8.

In 1984, the volume of Japan's trade with South Africa totalled US\$3.4 billion. In that year alone, \$50 million worth of Krugerrands (South African gold coins) were sold in Japan. Indeed, at a time when elsewhere in the world pressure for economic sanctions against South Africa is getting stronger and stronger, some Japanese politicians and businessmen are calling for increased economic relations with that country, on the grounds that South Africa's rare metals are indispensable for Japanese industry.

Rev. Farisani called on ordinary Japanese people to denounce the status of "honourary white" and support the fight against apartheid. That support can be in the form of letters of protest to the Japanese government and the South African government, or that support can take a financial form. Here Rev. Farisani said, "I am not just asking for hundreds or thousands of yen. We are asking for millions of yen, because Japan has already made \$3.4 billion through the apartheid system."

Amnesty International-Japan, which began a four-month Anti-Apartheid Campaign with Rev. Farisani's visit, hopes to send 10,000 letters and raise ¥5 million [approx. US\$28,000] through its

70 groups throughout Japan. While some of the funds collected will be used for educational purposes here in Japan, the bulk will be used to support families of detainees in South Africa.

Rev. Farisani shared with his listeners his own story of imprisonment and torture. He was arrested three times by South African security forces, and was imprisoned from March to June 1977, from November 1977 to January 1978 and from November 1981 to June 1982. During that time, he suffered numerous forms of torture. His powerful testimony lent credence to his statement that apartheid and torture are "twin sisters." "Apartheid cannot exist without violence and torture," he declared. As a result of the torture he received, including being suspended from a third-floor window by his legs, perforation of his eardrums and electric shocks to his earlobes, genitals and toes, Rev. Farisani suffered three heart attacks and spent over three months in hospital. It was during the times of his imprisonment that he was adopted as "prisoner of conscience" by Amnesty International-Japan.

Those present at the Christian Centre gathering were told not to be taken in by the recent lifting of the State of Emergency by the government of South Africa on March 7. Rev. Farisani termed that action as the "political joke of the century" and a "political ploy to hoodwink the West." The situation of blacks in South Africa cannot undergo fundamental change under apartheid, he stressed.

When asked to comment on efficacy of disinvestment in South Africa, Rev. Farisani said he has gotten tired of hearing that "disinvestment hurts the blacks." The hue and cry against disinvestment (of foreign firms from South Africa) comes mostly from the South African government itself and from other industrial nations, not from blacks themselves. The recent consumer boycotts in South Africa are being undertaken by blacks prepared to suffer the consequences. Said Farisani, "Simple black people are saying our human dignity comes before our stomachs."

SISTER CHRISTINE TAN

SPEAKS IN TOKYO

[Sister Tan, a Roman Catholic religious of the Order of the Good Shepherd visited Tokyo from Manila April 6 - 8. The following is a reflection on the "Philippine Revolution of 1986" she shared with friends.]

The Philippine revolution of 1986 is over. Even now, we Filipinos cannot fathom the intermingling of forces which spelled the swift and sudden defeat of a twenty-year dictatorship.

The events of February 25, 1986 shattered a regime. It also shattered a few myths about people and freedom. Against years of strategies and timetables the revolution surprised us by starting in the prime urban centre of Metro Manila, instead in the countryside. The middle-class, for long given up as hopeless, were the main instruments against military arms, not the conscientized masses.

There were other shattered myths--how could unorganized millions arrive at a common task and a common method? How did women, common housewives and workers, receive the magic to overpower tanks? Was there any other revolution in which prayer has been recognized, even by atheists, as a decisive factor for victory?

What was the Philippine revolution really about? It was not a battle between democracy and dictatorship, or the victory of democracy over communism. It was not a victory of non-violence over violence. To us, from the very beginning of the February 7th national elections, every fight, skirmish and battle, from the guarding of ballots to the barricades, was a war between good and evil.

That is why there was almost no choice but to be totally immersed in the drama of the revolution, and to side with groups, organized or not, that aligned themselves against the evil of the moment. For this reason, one did not see the usual rallyists of young men or veteran protesters of the Marcos era, or hear the usual sloganeering. Instead, one was lost in the determination of

families, children, women and Church persons, of statues, rosaries, and Masses. There were no generals, core group or negotiating panel.

Yet significantly, there were also those who were absent. Among them were the conservative Church-goers and the radical left, the former because religion blocked their understanding, and the latter because ideology blocked their feeling. The revolution bypassed these two groups, and because they were not involved, their role during our period of national recovery is as yet undefined.

In describing the components that contributed to the overthrow of our repressive regime, one must finally acknowledge the nation's prayer. For the prayer that built up over 21 years of oppression, torture, lies, massacres, protest, conscientization, organization, was answered by God in the form of a miracle.

So, all over the world, we Filipinos are lauded as heroes. There is admiration intertwined with an honest element of surprise. Did they really do this? Was this not an American scenario? The radical left says we never had a revolution, only a change of leadership in a bourgeois government.

The above does not matter. Today, the Philippine situation differs vastly from the days of dictatorship. It calls for a fresh and creative approach from all. Within a month, our civil rights have been restored. Political detainees have been freed. The prices of basic commodities such as rice, fish, and gasoline have gone down. We enjoy a credible, honest leadership, not only from our president, but also from most of our cabinet ministers and department heads. There is generally jubilation and hope. We are proud to be Filipinos. Such an experience we have not tasted for decades...

We Filipinos did not fight a dictator. Our war was good against evil. During the post-revolution era, we Asians must be allies in this new revolution against evil. The battle ground is not only the Philippines, but any place where oppression exists.

(Sister Tan, continued)

In Japan, you have your own battles of injustice, untruth, immorality. Fight them. Do not ease your consciences by helping us with ours, while ignoring your own. The Japanese Church must not fall into the same tragedy of our conservative Church-goers and the radical left. She should not be bypassed by this new revolution. She must be immersed in it with her wealth of good-will and resources. She must make atonement for the sins of the Japanese government. She must change her old wineskins of ministry into the new wineskin of the urgent mission of political involvement. Then, the Japanese Church will create an impact surpassing the impact of the Japanese businessman, for you will reap comments, criticisms, censure. You will be born into a relevant Church, for you will be persecuted."

KYODAN COMMITTEES ISSUE
STATEMENT ON CELEBRATION
60th YEAR OF EMPEROR'S REIGN

[Four Committees of the United Church of Christ in Japan, the Kyodan, released a statement in early April expressing their opposition to the Government's plans for celebrations marking the 60th anniversary of Emperor Hirohito's reign. The Kyodan's Social Issues, Anti-Yasukuni Shrine, Buraku Liberation and Japan-Korea Church Relations Committees jointly issued the statement, part of which appears below, excerpted and translated by JCAN]

On April 29, the government is planning celebrations to mark the 60th Anniversary of Emperor Hirohito's reign. The security preparations for these celebrations and the upcoming Tokyo Summit (of 7 Industrialized countries, (May 4-6)), are making Tokyo resemble a city under Martial Law...

What is the meaning of the 60 years of Showa (the reign of Emperor Hirohito)? The first 20 years of the reign were years of invasion of other Asian countries and the killing of other Asian peoples under the Japanese imperialist system. In the past 40 years, after its defeat in the Pacific War, Japan has

reserged as an economic power without actually changing its system...

An illusion of peace and prosperity is promoted in Japan; an image which ignores the oppression of Buraku people, and foreigners in Japan, as well as the voices of the people of the "Third World"...

The Emperor's war responsibility is clear. After the war, the Emperor's political role became that of a symbol for unification of the nation. The Emperor system now functions to unify the people to uphold the illusive "oneness" imposed during the first 20 years of Showa.

In the last 60 years, what has the Kyodan pursued? We took a role supportive of Japan's invasion of other parts of Asia and the oppression of other peoples. We did this using the excuse of self-preservation. Under this same justification, we betrayed, to the Imperial police, our brothers and sisters who resisted the Emperor System...

We have not tackled the discrimination and oppression maintained by the Emperor system/ideology. Indeed, we have added our voices to the chorus of discrimination...

What is necessary is not a celebration of these 60 years of the Emperor's reign, but an examination of the history of those years and our own responsibility.

Kyodan Shimpo [Times]
April 12, 1986

[Editors' note:

April 29 is the present emperor's birthday and a national holiday.

Showa is the name chosen to designate the present emperor's reign. The two Chinese characters are those for "bright" and "harmony".]

昭和
Sho wa

WILL SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS

VISIT SHRINE?

[Will national leaders participating in the "Tokyo Summit" be invited to make formal visits to the Yasukuni Shrine? The NCC-Japan's Special Committee on the Yasukuni Shrine Issue shared this concern with diplomatic representatives of the participating countries.]

April 15th, 1986.

Dear Friends in Christ:

From May 4th to 6th 1986, the "Tokyo Summit" will be held in Japan. As Christians in Japan who oppose the nationalization of the Yasukuni Shrine, (a Shinto shrine where war-dead are enshrined), we bring this issue to your attention in the hope that you will discourage your national leaders from visiting this place during the occasion of the Summit.

From 1869 to 1945, the Yasukuni shrine was a prime institution of State Shintoism. It was a strong spiritual support of militarism, as it glorified the act of dying for the nation by deifying Japanese soldiers who died in war. During the war period, people of the nation were compelled to worship at shrines. In Korea and Taiwan, which were Japanese colonies at that time, many Christians were martyred because they refused to participate in the shrine worship.

After the defeat in World War II, the Yasukuni shrine lost its special status as a state shrine. It became an ordinary religious body as the new Constitution of Japan was built on the separation of religion and state. Since that time however, the movement to nationalize the Yasukuni shrine has developed along with the resurgence of militarism in Japan. Prime Minister Nakasone himself has said that the people must realize that to die for the nation is a glorious act.

Legislation to nationalize the shrine has been defeated in the Diet 5 times, yet the promoters of such legislation have not given up their intentions. The present Japanese prime minister first visited the Yasukuni shrine as a private person. However, on August 15th of last year, Prime Minister Nakasone paid an official visit to the shrine. There was immediate and continuing opposition to this action from both outside and within Japan.

Following the Prime Minister's official visit, the promoters of the nationalization of the shrine have made visits to the Yasukuni shrine by State guests their next target. They have started a move to pressure cabinet ministers and national guests to visit the shrine in order to give it special status.

Christians in Japan committed a grave sin when they worshipped at Shinto shrines in the past. This sin did not end simply with the sin of idol-worship but it developed into the sin of cooperation in the war and the invasion of other Asian countries. Today, we oppose the nationalization of the Yasukuni shrine as the sign of our deep repentance and also as a confession of war responsibility to Asia and the world.

When the Yasukuni bill was proposed, wide protest including hunger strikes took place. In opposition to official worship at the shrine, there are again widespread actions of protest as meetings, demonstrations, and signature campaigns, including both Christians and non-Christians, are taking place. Groups of individuals have begun suits in the courts against Nakasone on the claim that his act was unconstitutional.

We hope that, in some way, we have communicated our deep concern. We look forward to your cooperation and support on this matter.

[signed] OOSIMA Koiti
Commission Chairperson
SATO Kunihiro
Moderator, NCCJ
MAEJIMA Munetoshi
General Secretary, NCCJ

JUDGMENT ON "SUNDAY SUIT"

On March 20, 1986, the Tokyo District Council delivered its judgment against Revs. SAWA Masahiko and Yon, ministers of the United Church of Christ in Japan, whose case became known as the "Sunday suit for religious freedom."

The controversy began when the daughters of the Revs. Sawa failed to attend a special session of classes at Koiwa Elementary School in June 1982. It was Sunday morning and they chose to attend church school instead. The school administration, noting their absence, recorded this against them. The Sawas responded by taking the school administration to court, claiming that their religious freedom had been violated.

In handing down his ruling, the judge commented that it was the role of the school principal to supervise the administration of school programming. The court could find no legal grounds on which to compensate the two daughters who were recorded absent from school that day. The Sawas' claim that school programming on Sundays interfered with church school attendance failed to sway the judge and the court ruling sided with the right of the educational system to administer its programs as it saw fit.

In response to the judgment, Rev. SUZUKI Takehito commented that the subject of religious freedom is not, at this time, being treated as an issue in the courts. The ruling was an indication that, in Japan, many continue to regard Christianity as an ideal that should have no impact on secular life.

ATSUGI STRUGGLE FACES SET-BACK

In October 1984, JCAN carried a message entitled "Military Landing Exercises a Threat to Life." It was a plea from a citizens' group in Atsugi (outside Tokyo), who are currently plaintiffs in a civil suit seeking a ban on night flights of Japanese and American military aircraft using the Atsugi Air Base in Kanagawa prefecture.

Their letter, addressed to Christians in

the U.S.A. and around the world, included these words:

"...The painful reality is that the U.S. military and the Self Defense Forces of Japan have been causing unbearable torment in Atsugi, where 400,000 people live in a 4 kilometre area surrounding the base...The worst time for noise from this activity is during the evenings from 6 pm. while we are having our dinner until about 11 p.m. These repeated "touch and go" landing exercises create enormous roaring blasts from the planes. We are concerned and convinced that this is threatening our lives and well-being. The effects are especially apparent with small children and babies..."

...the blasts from the U.S. fights symbolize the destructive powers of the military presence which negates the message and sacrifice of Jesus Christ who has made us one in Him and brings peace to the world..."

The letter was signed by 4 representatives of the plaintiffs' group, including Rev. SUZUKI Shinji, a Kyodan minister.

On April 9, 1986 the Tokyo High Court refused to ban the night flights. In a ruling on an appeal from a lower court by local residents, the high court also rejected a demand by the plaintiffs for damages for physical and mental suffering caused by noise pollution. Ninety-two residents who lived around the base filed the original suit in Yokohama District Court in 1976.

In that suit, they cited Articles 13 and 25 of the Constitution that guarantee the right of all people to be respected as individuals and to maintain "minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living."

Based on these guarantees, they demanded that:

--Takeoffs and landings and the operation of aircraft engines be banned between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m.

--Aircraft noise be kept below 65 phons during the day between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

(Atsugi case continued)

--The plaintiffs each be paid ¥20,000 for every month they had lived near the base

--That they be paid ¥20,000 a month for future suffering

In October 1982, the district court ordering the government to pay a total of about ¥36 million to 80 of the 92 plaintiffs for past suffering. The court refused, however, to ban the flights or award damages for future suffering.

Both the government and the plaintiffs appealed the ruling to the Tokyo High Court. In the April 9, 1986 ruling, the court said a ban on night flights of Air Self Defense Forces planes involved national security and was a political question outside the jurisdiction of the court.

The court added that it did not have the authority to ban night flights by the U.S. military planes either, because the issue involved the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. Presiding Judge TANAKA Eiji stated that the judiciary "cannot intervene in highly political matters such as those related to national defense."

The ruling overturned the earlier decision by the Yokohama District Court which in effect had acknowledged the noise problem. The compensation was rejected this time on the grounds that the noise was within "levels of tolerance."

In regard to physical suffering because of the noise, the judge said that the plaintiffs' contention was extremely vague, with any objective proof based on medical examinations. To this, one of the plaintiffs commented, "Does the judge expect us to show up with broken bones?" One 33 year old man said, "We built a soundproof room from my father but the noise was just unbearable for him, during the repeated 'touch and go' exercises. We had to move my father to another location but he dies within 2 months. My wife also had to move away from our house during the time she was pregnant as she feared a miscarriage."

The Defense Facilities Administration Agency has been soundproofing houses around the base since 1975 and had completed 35,000 of the approximately 92,000 house effected. As the foregoing comments suggest however, this has done little to ease the problem.

Notwithstanding the legal defeats the citizens have faced, the Defense Agency some time ago announced plans to construct new facilities for night flight practice on the island of Miyake. [See JCAN #627, December 1985] Mayor TERASAWA Haruo of Miyake Island, representing the 85% of the population opposing the construction of a military airstrip, said the Atsugi court decision strengthened his determination to fight the government plan.

Mayor Terasawa said that "I learned that facilities based on the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty cannot be touched by residents. It will be the end of everything once a night landing practice is constructed."

The Atsugi residents have vowed to continue their struggle, and have already begun an appeal of the Tokyo High Court decision to the Supreme Court of Japan.

[Adapted from reports of April 10, 1986, in the Daily Yomiuri, Mainichi Daily News and the Asahi Evening News.]

NEGROS CAMPAIGN NEWS

As part of the continuing "Negros Campaign" a photo exhibition of Negros Island opened in Tokyo April 14. Running until April 27, the exhibition forms part of the nation-wide campaign which will continue until December of this year. The campaign has two key aims: first, to educate Japanese about one part of the Philippines where people are facing extreme hardship, and second, to raise funds for both immediate hunger relief and long-term development efforts.

Dessa Quesada, a young Filipina performer who visited Japan last year to share songs of struggle and hope, began a singing tour of Japan through the Negros Campaign mid-April.

OUR GRANDMOTHERS

--KIM Myong Shik

42 years ago, our grandmothers
were taken.

"Entertainers" for Japan's Imperial Army.

Ill-treated during the day
they were trampled down at night.
Blossom of their youth
sacrificed for the Imperial Army.

Our grandmothers

were taken to the front line in Burma.
They wept countless nights.

The sound of bullets ceased more than 40 years ago
yet the shame and discrimination remains.

Their tears have filled a river of grief.

They lost so much--
the words of their motherland
even the name of their beloved homeland.

Today our grandmothers

dream nightmares 40 years old.

Night upon night

at the front line
of the Imperial Army,
the virgins of Asia were trampled upon.

Once again they face the Imperial boots.

KIM Myong Shik, with the help of his daughter Min ha, read the above poem in a musical written and performed by young people on the theme of changing the Alien Registration Law. Kim, a Korean studying in Japan, refused to fingerprint last year.

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